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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, Jan. 29, 1932

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "An Oyster Meal for a Chilly Day." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

"Hello, Aunt Sammy. Good morning, Uncle Ebenezer. My, how cozy it looks here with you two having breakfast by that nice snapping fire. I'm going to sit right down beside you."

And with that greeting, said all in one breath, our little neighbor from across the street shook the snow from her coat and sat down in the chair Uncle Ebenezer drew up for her.

"I hope you are in a missionary mood this morning, Aunt Sammy," she went on, as soon as she was seated.

"Who's in need of a missionary?" inquired Uncle Ebenezer. "No heathens around here to be converted, are there?"

"No, but somebody's in need of charity and I'm that somebody."

"Oh, dear me. Anything I can do?"

"Well, it's this way. Bill is bringing an old school friend of his home to lunch on Saturday. Of course, when I heard that news I asked what he would like to have to eat. And Bill said, 'One thing I always remember about Jerry is that he was crazy about oysters, could eat tons of them any time of the day or night. Couldn't we have some oysters for him?' So, you see, it's up to me to have an oyster lunch on Saturday. And I thought I'd come over for Aunt Sammy's advice on what to serve besides oysters."

Uncle Ebenezer looked gloomy. "I might have guessed it. Oh, I should have suspected it from the very first. Just when I thought you were coming in for a nice chat with me, I find that you're after a menu. It's discouraging to an elderly uncle, that's what it is. All these neighbors drop in but what they want is a bulletin or a recipe or something else, just when I'm looking forward to a chat."

"Well, now Uncle Ebenezer, you want me to have a good meal ready for my husband's best friend, don't you? And by the way, how about a few suggestions from you on the problem. You know what men like to eat."

Uncle Ebenezer scratched his head and said it sounded like a very serious problem to him but he'd try to help if he could.

"Let's see," said he. "Now let me consider a minute. You want a simple lunch, a man's lunch, an oyster lunch, a lunch for a chilly day. That's quite an order. I'll tell you, though. Did you ever eat any of those panned oysters the way Aunt Sammy fixes them? They'd be just the thing. You ask Aunt Sammy and I'll bet she'll give you the recipe for them."

The little bride took out her notebook and wrote panned oysters.

"Got that down?" asked Uncle Ebenezer. "Now if this Jerry is a real man, I know just what he'll want to eat with those oysters. He'll want some golden brown French fried potatoes. Yes, siree."

"That sounds good. Oysters and French fried potatoes."

"Now then, I suppose you'll want some vegetable to go with those two items. I always think something with tomato in it is good with oysters. You know -- tomatoes are tart and their bright color makes the plate look tempting, especially in a meal like this. So I'd suggest stewed tomatoes and celery. That's easy. And you might serve a few olives or pickles for green color and extra flavor."

"Stewed tomatoes and celery," repeated the little bride, as she wrote. "That's a recipe in the green cookbook that I often use. And olives or pickles. What else, Uncle Ebenezer?"

"I'll bet both Bill and Jerry would be tickled with some of those hot biscuits of yours, especially if Saturday is as cold a day as this."

"And dessert,? What shall we have for dessert?"

"I guess you'll have to ask your Aunt Sammy about dessert. I seem to be all out of ideas."

So I suggested that jellied fruit dessert that also appears in the green radio cookbook.

Uncle Ebenezer nodded. "One of those nervous puddings that have to shake and quiver. That shows they're nice and tender. Some women make their gelatin desserts too stiff, but not Aunt Sammy nor anyone else who follows the Recipe lady. I've heard her say that any gelatin dessert should be delicate and tender, and quivery. This special jellied fruit dessert has all sorts of good things folded in it -- orange, pineapple, sliced peaches and bananas. A handsome dessert and a very good one, too."

"I'll make that jelly the night before and have it all ready waiting in the refrigerator until it's dessert time. No last-minute fuss and bother. I'll have the cream for it whipped ahead of time, too, so I can concentrate on my oysters, potatoes and biscuits just before the meal."

"And now that the menu's all planned," said Uncle Ebenezer, "how about giving this young lady a recipe for panned oysters?"

This recipe is in the green radio cookbook, but I'm going to give it now to anyone without a book. And, by the way, these ingredients I'm giving will be enough to serve five or six people.

1 and 1/2 quarts of oysters
1/4 cup of butter
2 tablespoons of chopped parsley
Salt and paprika

That makes five ingredients. Shall I go over them again? (Repeat.)

First, drain off the liquor from the oysters and look them over carefully for any bits of shell. Then, in a heavy skillet, brown the fat slightly, and add the oysters and the parsley. Cook at a moderate heat for about five minutes -- or until the edges of the oysters begin to curl. Add salt, if needed. Then serve at once on a hot platter and sprinkle highly with paprika.

That's all about the oysters. Other items on the menu are also mentioned in that handy green volume I refer to so often. The mold of jellied fruit is a very tempting looking finish for a meal, especially if it is served with whipped cream.

And that reminds me. Did you ever consider what makes cream whip? Did you ever have a bowl of cream that you could beat and beat until your arm ached without its whipping? And then another bowlful will whip with scarcely any effort. What makes the difference?

I asked that question of some of the experts in the Bureau of Dairy Industry and here is what they told me about it:

Ice cold cream containing not less than thirty per cent butter fat will give the best results for whipping. Cream which meets these requirements should whip to a stiff mass that will stand up for days in the ice box without excessive loss from drainage of liquid.

Stiffening the clusters of fat particles by lowering the temperature is essential to satisfactory whipping. The whipping process incorporates air into the cream, thus increasing the volume of the mass. A high percentage of fat supplies a greater amount of semi-solid material to stiffen the cream.

Two things happen at once when cream is whipped. First, air is incorporated into the cream and increases the volume. Second, fat globules form into clusters which stiffen the mass. The stiffness of whipped cream is due, then, to the formation of these irregular clusters of fat globules which form a very complicated network in which the fluid part of the cream is suspended. If conditions are right, very little of this fluid will drain out, so long as the whipped cream is kept in a cold place. A high percentage of fat, therefore, makes a denser and more rigid network, while the cold keeps the fat globules hard.

The cream should be cold at the start of the whipping process. And better results will follow if the bowl and whipper are cooled with cold water previous to use. The best type of cream whipper, tests have shown, is one with a bladed wheel or paddle which spins on the bottom of the bowl. Beaters of this type whip cream faster and stiffer than other beaters.

So you see, if you want to save elbow grease when whipping cream, it pays to have the right kind of beater and to have the bowl and the cream itself cold.

And here's another point about success in this matter.

Too much whipping, say the experts, is just as bad as too little. Be sure to stop at the point where the cream has reached a good degree of stiffness. Under ideal conditions, this will be within two minutes. When the cream is properly whipped, it will remain unchanged for several days, except possibly in flavor, if it is kept in the refrigerator.

Monday, we'll talk about entertaining informal parties for the club or a group of friends.

